

both Mr. WALZ and Mr. WENSTRUP are both veterans, and we are so grateful for their service to our country in so many different ways.

Mr. Chair, it was our first commander-in-chief, George Washington, who said, and I paraphrase, that we can never expect young men and women to rise to the occasion to fight for our country and for our freedom unless we take care of those who have already sacrificed on the battlefield. So the wonderful thing about serving on the Committee for Veterans Affairs, Mr. Chair, is that it is completely bipartisan.

This is all about our veterans. We just love them in the State of Maine—66,000 veterans strong in our Second District of Maine, Mr. Chair. We have one of the highest percentages of our population that are veterans in the country, and we are very, very proud of that.

I must say that, in my dealings with Togus—which is, by the way, Mr. Chair, the first military hospital in the country. It is about 150 years old now. They set up to take care of our Civil War veterans about 150 years ago.

In any event, in talking with the folks at Togus, they made it very clear to me, Mr. Chair, that one of their biggest problems they have, and it is ongoing, is: How do we hire quickly and retain the best quality doctors, nurses, and medical technicians to care for our heroes?

That is why I am so excited and grateful for this opportunity to vote for H.R. 1367, because it helps solve one of these problems. It removes red tape in the hiring process. It streamlines the hiring process.

The Veterans Administration has about 360,000 employees, so it is a very large organization. When that happens, of course, you need to deal with administrative burdens and red tape and what have you.

So I am encouraging all of my fellow colleagues here, Republicans and Democrats, to make sure they vote for this bill, H.R. 1367, because our best fought for us, Mr. Chair, our best fought for us. It is time that our best take care of those who fought for us.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I have no further speakers and will be prepared to close after the gentleman is done.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1367, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chair, I can't thank the gentleman enough—smart legislation combining many good ideas, willingness to incorporate those best practices, and then, I think, forcing VA to start moving in that direction.

This is an example, I think, of where the VA is at. And while we may disagree, and you saw a little bit of it today, it is not because there is any disagreement on what the final outcome is.

Dr. WENSTRUP's bill is smart. It will improve care; it will get good people in the VA; it will retain them; and it will improve HR practices to make sure that happens.

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill and some of the amendments that will work to improve upon a very good piece of legislation.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POLIQUIN) having assumed the chair, Mr. BUDD, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LOUISE HOPKINS UNDERWOOD

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life and legacy of Louise Hopkins Underwood, a west Texas icon who passed away Tuesday, March 7, at the age of 97.

Mrs. Underwood was known as a charismatic woman with a sharp sense of humor. A woman loved by all, she was gracious, she was generous, and she was inspirational.

Mrs. Underwood was the mother of six and a pioneer in her quest to promote a passion for the arts and a stronger sense of community on the south plains.

Our region, which has a rich history better known for farming and ranching, is now also known for the arts, thanks to Mrs. Underwood.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 says:

A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

Thank you, Mrs. Underwood. Thank you for your fragrant life and for leaving a legacy of a brighter, more colorful west Texas.

God bless the Underwood family.

CONDEMNING HEALTHCARE BILL

(Mr. GOTTHEIMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against the healthcare bill that is currently making its way through the House. It is an attack on seniors that will raise New Jersey taxes, and I refuse to sit idly by.

First, it includes a premium senior tax that would make older Americans

pay five times more for their health care.

Second, the plan before Congress takes aim at long-term care to support the elderly and disabled and could ultimately throw seniors out of nursing homes. Three out of five nursing home residents in New Jersey rely on Medicaid to access long-term care.

Finally, it is not only seniors who would be hurt. This bill is a new tax on all New Jersey residents. It cuts Medicaid and leaves the State holding the bag for other States, and it puts additional costs on New Jersey to confront healthcare challenges like the opioid crisis sweeping our State.

We need a bipartisan fix to the Affordable Care Act. This plan does just the opposite. I am ready to sit at the table with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to come up with a real fix.

BILLIONAIRE'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUDD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and I believe some of my colleagues will be joining me, to talk about the budget that has just been released by this President.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that while it is being called a skinny budget, we call it the billionaire's budget. It is the same misguided, rambling, unfocused, bloated giveaway to rich and corporate interests that has been offered for years.

My belief is that a budget is a statement of our values. This budget ensures that the rich get richer at the cost of working people, the environment, and the future of our country.

Funding has been axed for nearly 20 agencies, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition to elimination of these important agencies, the billionaire's budget guts funding for several other important agencies.

You can see here by this chart from The Washington Post exactly what is happening: the Environmental Protection Agency chopped by 31 percent; the State Department cut by 29 percent; Agriculture cut by 21 percent, the Labor Department by 21 percent.

And the cuts go on through every single agency of critical importance to the American people: Department of Health and Human Services, Commerce, Education, Housing and Urban Development at a time when we have a tremendous housing crisis in this country.

Transportation, from a President who said that he was going to invest in our infrastructure, yet here you see that the Transportation budget has a 13 percent cut.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the cost of security for the Trump Tower is \$183 million a year. The budget for the National Endowment for the Arts is \$148 million a year.

There are some other cuts that we could do if we were that concerned, but let's talk about housing. Housing access and affordability is squarely on the chopping block in this billionaire's budget.

With a \$4.3 billion cut, HUD will lose its Community Development Block Grant program. Now, some people don't know exactly what the Community Development Block Grant program does; and, in fact, it sounded like Director Mulvaney didn't know that either when he was asked about a critical program that is funded through this Community Development Block Grant program, and that is funding for Meals on Wheels.

There are communities across this country that fund their Meals on Wheels program, which is funding for meals for the elderly who cannot get to somewhere where they can get a meal, and so we take them a meal. That is Meals on Wheels, an incredibly bipartisan, beloved program. Unfortunately, that would go away because the CDBG program would be cut; and, therefore, the Meals on Wheels program would be cut.

These programs are an integral part of building up our communities, both through affordable housing as well as through some of these critical programs that go as wraparound services to affordable housing.

The city of Seattle, which I represent, is currently in a state of emergency due to its housing crisis. Right now, there are around 3,000 people experiencing homelessness in the city and nearly 10,000 in the surrounding areas—veterans, families, LGBTQ youth.

This is unacceptable. Access to stable housing is absolutely critical to making sure that members of our community are safe and able to access the services they need to get back on track and live full lives.

Let's talk about Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services is facing an 18 percent cut to its funding, which could have devastating—and I am talking about life and death—consequences here, absolutely devastating impacts.

It would decrease the funding for the National Institutes of Health, for cancer and medical research, critical pro-

grams that help us to figure out how we save lives in this country and actually are part of the innovation that the United States offers. Gutting this funding would put us at a grave disadvantage, and it would put people's lives at risk.

Transportation, another critical area that this President promised that he was going to invest in. He was going to make sure we were bringing forward jobs, that we were investing in our infrastructure, our crumbling roads and bridges, making sure that we are investing in critical transit and transportation projects. But in this budget, the Transportation budget is facing a 13 percent cut. That is nearly half a billion dollars from the TIGER grant program, which has allowed our country to carry out critical infrastructure improvement projects not just in one kind of a city, not just in urban areas, but urban and rural areas alike.

The billionaire's budget would also cut funding to all new fully funded grant agreements, including some really important projects in cities across the country.

In Seattle, our critical streetcar project would be cut; and light rail expansion, which we have been working on for years, the State has invested in a bipartisan way—when I was in the State senate, we actually passed a \$15 billion transportation infrastructure package because we knew that we had to deal with the transportation infrastructure needs of business, of our communities across the State and the influx of people into our State.

□ 1845

We agreed in a bipartisan way that this was something we needed to do. Part of that agreement included being able to fund the next phase of light-rail across our region.

Our Sound Transit CEO, Peter Rogoff, calls this budget a "body blow." I couldn't agree with him more. We are looking at potentially a \$7.7 billion cut to Sound Transit.

These are major transportation projects for our cities. They would create jobs, which is what this President said that he wanted to do, is create jobs. But by gutting these funds and gutting investment in transportation infrastructure, we will be stopping the very projects that are going to create those jobs and help our cities and rural areas make the necessary upgrades that they need to thrive.

Mr. Speaker, one of the worst areas that is hit in this budget is the environment. This billionaire's budget is an all-out assault on our environment and efforts to fund research and curb climate change.

President Trump has found ways to wreak havoc on our efforts to protect our planet by, in this budget, cutting climate research and protection funds to multiple departments. This isn't just the Environmental Protection Agency, but we are talking also about NASA space exploration and many

other areas that ensure that we preserve this planet for the next generation.

I have got a 20-year-old, Mr. Speaker, and when I was running for Congress, he said to me: Mom, you have got to work on climate change. It is one of the most important issues facing my generation. You are the stewards of our lands. If you don't take care of this planet, then we won't have anything left and my children won't have anything left.

This is my 20-year-old son telling me this. Mr. Speaker, I promised him I would do everything I can for his generation and future generations to protect our planet.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest cuts in this budget is to the Environmental Protection Agency. This is a 32 percent cut to the Environmental Protection Agency. This decimates all of our work on climate change, all of the research that we need to do so we know how to protect our climate, all of the work on environmental justice programs, which is really essential when you think about who is taking the burden of climate change. It is our low-income communities, communities of color, and other vulnerable and marginalized communities.

I have always believed that we should rename the EPA. Environmental Protection Agency makes it sound like it is something off in the distance, like it is about something out there. But, in fact, what the Environmental Protection Agency does is monitor our water so that we have clean water to drink and use. It monitors our air so that we have clean air to breathe and we don't have asthma and other respiratory diseases that come with air that is so polluted that we can't even survive in it. It ensures that we are protecting human health.

We could rename the EPA the Agency for Clean Water, Clean Air, and Human Health, and I think that that would cover a lot of what the EPA does.

The EPA's cut is going to result in 3,200 lost jobs. That is 20 percent of the department. Research programs would be discontinued both domestically and around the world, and programs like the Clean Power Plan and numerous restoration projects, including a critical restoration project in the Puget Sound, the Puget Sound Restoration, would lose 93 percent of its funding. This is true of the Great Lakes region. There are places in Republican and Democratic districts across this country that are going to suffer and see environmental protection being rapidly undone.

President Trump has made it painfully clear that he and his administration are enemies not only of the environment, but of the science that tells us that yes, we must address climate change because it is real and it is man-made. Yet, we are fighting efforts to consistently undermine the research and the science that shows us exactly

where we are as a country and what we must do in order to protect our environment.

Let me talk about education for a second. With the appointment of Betsy DeVos to the Department of Education, President Trump has signaled that his administration has every intention of doing whatever they can to privatize our education system. The billionaire's budget takes the first steps in that process.

It increases charter school funding by \$168 million and it adds \$250 million to create a new, private school choice program. It cuts \$3.7 billion in grants that go toward after-school programs, aid programs, and important teacher training.

This budget would decimate Head Start. Head Start is a program that has been shown to be successful. When you invest early in kids' education and you make sure that you give them that early support, it definitely has an impact in diminishing and breaking that school-to-prison pipeline.

These are investments that save us money in the long run. Not only are they the most humane thing to do and the right thing to do, but they are actually cost-effective programs that stop us from having to spend millions of dollars down the line when people can't get a great public education.

We should be investing in our public education program and making sure that we are helping kids to go all the way from early learning to higher education. That is the foundation of a great country, when we are educating and investing in our students to have that kind of a great education.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague from the Progressive Caucus is here. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN), the wonderful Representative from that State, because I know he has got somewhere to go right after this. I invite him to come up here, and I thank him for his leadership on all issues constitutional and otherwise.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, we are so proud of the leadership Congresswoman JAYAPAL is showing in both Washington State and Washington, D.C., in resisting these terrible cuts to the domestic budget of the people of the United States, in showing leadership, also especially in defending American values when it comes to immigration and affording a refuge to people fleeing political and religious repression all over the world.

She is a true leader and we are very proud of her. I am grateful that she is sharing a couple of minutes with me tonight to talk about the astonishing news of the day, which is the most dramatic and draconian budget cuts offered perhaps in our lifetime to the domestic budget of the United States.

It is going to take us many days—many weeks, indeed—to fully analyze what exactly will be axed with these budget proposals, but I wanted to start with a little exchange that took place today with Mick Mulvaney, who is

leading the budget effort for the President.

He had a press conference and he was asked about the implications of these billions of dollars of cuts to Meals on Wheels. He was asked about one specific program, and he had no problem basically casting Meals on Wheels to the curbside, saying: "It's just not showing any results." Which is why the Trump administration apparently feels good about slashing the domestic budget, including the community development block grants which help support Meals on Wheels across the country.

Well, let's just take this one tiny little example, then. Meals on Wheels actually serves 2.4 million Americans between the ages of 60 and 100. These are people who, for reasons of illness or physical infirmity or simply poverty, cannot go grocery shopping for themselves or prepare meals for themselves.

Why don't we take a moment to praise the people at Meals on Wheels who actually do something constructive and patriotic for their country. They bring food to older people who might otherwise go without.

You might say: Well, that is just kind of mushy-headed and soft-hearted. We are in the age of the budget ax. We need to destroy these domestic programs that are a terrible burden on the taxpayers.

Check out a 2013 review of studies on the issue of home-delivered meal programs like Meals on Wheels. The study says that these programs "significantly improve diet quality, increase nutrient intake, and reduce food insecurity and nutritional risk among participants. Other beneficial outcomes include increased socialization opportunities, improvement in dietary adherence, and higher quality of life."

Well, maybe you don't care about any of those things. Maybe you just consider about the bottom line.

Consider this finding. These programs are aligned with the Federal cost-containment policy to rebalance long-term care away from nursing homes to home and community-based services by helping older adults maintain independence and remain in their homes and communities as their health and functioning decline.

You see, for Mr. Mulvaney and President Trump and the Cabinet of billionaires and CEOs and ethically challenged Russian-influenced corporate titans, they don't care about how the program is actually working right here in American communities.

They don't care about facts. We know they have contempt for facts, which is why they give us their alternative facts. They don't care about studies and books because we know the President is their leader and he doesn't read books.

They definitely don't care about the elderly people who can't make it to the grocery store or who can't afford nutritious meals on their own. These are the same people, after all, that they propose to throw to the curb on Medicaid,

with their proposal released last week in the cloak of darkness to repeal the Affordable Care Act and gut Medicaid and replace it with a monstrosity of a program which even their own Members can't support. Under their plan, 14 million would lose their healthcare insurance. Millions of elderly people would lose their insurance.

Now, with this mean-spirited little proposal to take a relative crumb away from the community development block grant and from Meals on Wheels, they would deprive a lot of people even of a wholesome dinner delivered to their home.

Why do they want to slash all of these programs across the board: the EPA, the State Department, the Agriculture Department, the Labor Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Commerce Department, the Education Department, HUD, Transportation, Interior, and so on? Why?

Well, the President has announced he wants to take \$54 billion out of that slice of the pie for nondefense discretionary spending, which accounts for only 16 percent of the overall budget, and put that \$54 billion directly into the Pentagon.

Just to repeat, they want to take \$54 billion out of the domestic budget, non-defense discretionary spending, and put it into the Pentagon for a military buildup.

But for what?

The world's second largest military power is Russia. We outspend them 10 to 1. We are a giant and they are a dwarf.

Vladimir Putin, in any event, is Donald Trump's best friend, his BFF, his bosom buddy. The Trump-Putin relationship may be the President's most successful long-term relationship, at least politically speaking.

All that money that goes to the Pentagon, why? What is it for? Is it possible that Mr. Bannon and Mr. Trump are thinking about a war drive?

The President has tweeted about World War III in a very cavalier and flippant way.

It is disturbing. Nobody really knows. But one thing we do know is that all of that money that goes over to the Pentagon, if history is any record, will be available for the beltway bandits, the inside players with political influence and the mega corporations to go and make a buck off of the American taxpayer.

We will strip it from the EPA, and we will strip it from the Department of State, and we will strip it from education and we will put it in the Pentagon, and that is where we know a lot of people are going to get rich.

□ 1900

They are going from Meals on Wheels to deals on wheels. That is the name of the game. No more Meals on Wheels. It is all about deals on wheels. You have got to know the President, you have got to know the inside players in the

billionaire Cabinet, and then you can make some money.

Who are they going to sacrifice for this operation announced this week?

Well, it would take us all night to go through all of the domestic programs and projects that the American people depend on that are going to be sliced and diced because of this budget proposal, at least if it goes through.

But let's start with the National Institutes of Health, the NIH. The administration proposes to cut nearly \$6 billion from the NIH—\$5.8 billion they want to get rid of.

Now, what is the NIH, which happens to be in my congressional district in Rockville—and I am so proud of that—where we have got doctors and nurses and researchers and scientists who are working every day as part of the institutional world leader in biomedical research?

This is an entity that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs. These cuts would devastate the NIH and their ability to research lifesaving cures and treatments for diseases.

What kinds of diseases are being treated there?

I am not going to be able to go through all of them because there are hundreds of them that are being researched, where treatments are being developed, where patients are being seen, where progress is being made. Acute respiratory distress syndrome, Agent Orange and dioxin, aging, alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, ALS, anorexia, anthrax, antimicrobial resistance, anxiety disorders, aphasia, arthritis, assistive technology, asthma, attention deficit disorder, autism, autoimmune disease. That is just the A's.

Let's keep going a little bit. Batten disease, biodefense, bioengineering, biotechnology, bipolar disorder, brain cancer, brain disorders, breast cancer, cancer, cannabinoid research, cardiovascular, cerebral palsy, cervical cancer, child abuse and neglect research, Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, childhood leukemia, chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, climate change, climate-related exposures and conditions, colorectal cancer, and on and on. That is just the A's, the B's, and the C's.

They want to cut \$6 billion from the NIH, which is working to cure, address, study, and manage the diseases and the sicknesses that our people are dealing with; and just cavalierly they say they want to slash it so they can pour all of this money over to the military side for a reason unknown.

When they came down with their executive orders, which have now been struck down by multiple Federal District Courts as unconstitutional, as a violation of the Establishment Clause, as a violation likely of due process and equal protection and so on, what they cited was 9/11 multiple times. They cited 9/11. The odd thing, though, was that the three source countries for the

9/11 hijackers—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates—were left off their executive orders, even right up until today.

Why?

Some people say it is because Donald Trump has extensive business dealings with corporations and governments in those three countries. Nobody really knows. But they developed those orders, which the GOP proudly once called the Muslim ban, in response allegedly to 9/11. Even if you could blame an entire people for the acts of individual terrorists, they didn't do it. They turned to some other countries because that didn't interfere with the President's business interests.

So we have got this huge military buildup and we have got the siphoning away of tens of billions of dollars of the American people's hard-earned money away from medical research and diseases and environmental protection all into the Pentagon. For what reason, nobody knows, and they haven't told us.

What a dangerous moment this is in the life of the American Republic. What a perilous time this is for a nation built on the principle that that great Republican President Abraham Lincoln called government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Their budget proposal is a job killer. It is going to kill hundreds of thousands of jobs. It devastates and ruins the search for cures, the progress we are making in diseases like cystic fibrosis and diabetes. Diseases that afflict hundreds of thousands, millions of our people, they are just going to pull the plug on that. They are ransacking our children's education. They are hollowing out the rural communities. They are making urban life far more dangerous. They are weakening our leadership overseas. And, of course, because they don't believe in climate change, they are undermining our ability to respond to the great peril that faces us as a people.

Just like the proposal to trash the Affordable Care Act cannot go through this body because there must be a majority of responsible Members of this body who will not accept that terrible proposal that will throw 24 million of our people off their insurance, this body also cannot accept this terrible budget. It must have arrived here DOA.

If a foreign government, a rival to America, an enemy of America, had come up with this budget, we would regard it as an act of aggression against the American people. You could view it as a declaration of war against the prosperity, the health, and the welfare of our own people. But, alas, it didn't come from abroad. At least it was addressed that it came from the White House. It appears to have come from the administration, yet it threatens our way of life.

I would urge all of my colleagues to very carefully study this budget proposal over the next week or two and make clear that these are not the pri-

orities of the American people, make clear that these are not the values of the American people, and this is not the future of the American people. We must continue to make progress. That means we must reject the Trump budget.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative RASKIN for his consistent brilliance and leadership. I so appreciate it. It has been a tremendous honor to serve with him here.

I want to talk about another area that we haven't covered yet, which is the State and development programs budget. This is essentially our efforts around diplomacy and development around the world. This would be incredibly hard hit. The prime target is the United Nations. Climate change initiatives at the United Nations would lose all of their funding. The government would cut back its regular contribution to the U.N. and pay no more than 25 percent of the cost of U.N. peacekeeping operations. The budget would hit all of the multilateral development banks, like the World Bank, which would be trimmed by \$650 million over 3 years, and cultural programs like the East-West Center in Honolulu.

Today a number of Republican colleagues talked about how misguided this cut was, and it made me very hopeful, to be honest. Representatives HAL ROGERS and TED YOHO both agree that this cut is absolutely misguided.

Several retired three- and four-star generals wrote a letter to Congress expressing their deep concern over these serious budget cuts that are being made to the State Department because they know that diplomacy goes hand in hand with any kind of defense that has to be put out there. You have got to have the two together. Here is what they said: "The State Department, USAID, Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps and other development agencies are critical to preventing conflict and reducing the need to put our men and women in uniform in harm's way."

In 2013, General Mattis himself said that if more funding for development wasn't provided, he would have to buy more bullets. Development programs are inextricably linked with our national security, and this President should not be cutting these funds if he wants to bolster national security. If he wants to bolster national security, then we should be investing more of our dollars into diplomacy and development as two of the other legs of a three-legged stool. Unfortunately, he is going in the opposite direction.

Our aid and development efforts have to be well-rounded and holistic. I know this because I have worked in international development before all over the world. I have worked along the borders of Laos and Cambodia, in Thailand. I have worked across south Asia. I have worked in Latin America. I know and I understand that our relationships and our ability to build

strong multilateral coalitions and to invest in the stability of countries as war is happening there is absolutely essential to preserving peace.

The generals wrote: “We know from our service in uniform that many of the crises our nation faces do not have military solutions alone—from confronting violent extremist groups like ISIS in the Middle East and north Africa to preventing pandemics like Ebola. . . .”

This 29 percent cut is absolutely unacceptable and will not keep us safe.

The billionaire’s budget doesn’t just cut funding for these programs, though. It also increases spending, and not for the benefit of our communities. This administration is calling for \$3 billion to detain more immigrants, deport more people, and build a bigger border wall. The staggering increase to detain an unprecedented 45,700 men and women is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, 167 men and women have died in detention since October 2003. The organization that I used to work at put out a human rights abuses report about the detention center controlled by the GEO corporation, private detention center way back in 2005 or 2006. We looked at all of the human rights abuses that were happening not only in that detention center, but we did research on what was happening around the country.

Among the 35 death reviews in this recent report that came out that have been released through Freedom of Information Act requests, substandard medical care contributed to at least 15 deaths. And even when government investigations concluded that a facility violated government detention standards, the government fails to hold these private facilities accountable and make sure that changes are made to address deficiencies that lead to the loss of human life.

Instead of spending \$3 billion on immigration enforcement and detention, here is what we could do with that money: We could create 45,000 new middle class jobs. We could build 184 new elementary schools. We could hire about 55,000 new kindergarten and elementary schoolteachers. We could provide close to 337,000 Head Start slots for young kids. We could pay for nearly 311,000 people to attend a 4-year college per year. We could help States protect and save up to 12,000 at-risk wildlife and plant species in the United States every year for the next 2.3 years. By the way, we could also provide nearly 2.1 million households with solar energy. We could weatherize over 460,000 homes nationwide, saving the average household about \$283 a year. And we could provide 10 million lifesaving HIV/AIDS treatments.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is about profit over safety, privatization over public good. It is about war over peace and diplomacy. And it is about incarceration over rehabilitation. It is fundamentally about billionaires and lobbyists over the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1915

RECOGNIZING VICTOR MARX

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GALLAGHER). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Victor Marx is a man dedicated to spreading the great truth that even in the face of hate and violence, the love of God can heal even the most wounded among us. Victor’s full life story has been chronicled in the book “The Victor Marx Story” and in a film by the same name.

Victor’s animating, faith-motivated, moral imperative to help the suffering has fueled the mission of All Things Possible to free children from abuse and the effects of its trauma.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and to commend Victor Marx and All Things Possible Ministries for the work they do to reach out and embrace traumatized individuals across the world.

In 2015, All Things Possible launched high-risk missions to bring hope to those suffering abuse at the hands of evil in the Middle East. Victor and his team, including Dave Eubank of Free the Oppressed, visited Iraq to help over 300 young women and children who were previously held captive or traumatized by the violence of ISIS.

In an effort to provide children with tangible comfort, ATP launched the Lions and Lambs project. More than 11,000 little boys and girls have received stuffed animals that play cultural songs and prayers in a language native to their region. These signs of huggable hope remind them that they are not forgotten by the outside world.

In 2016, Victor and his team initiated efforts to find persecuted Christian families in northern Iraq and move them to safe havens in neighboring countries. To date, ATP has relocated more than 40 individuals specifically targeted by ISIS for elimination, giving them hope for a safer, better life, and restoring their faith in the human spirit.

Last year, ATP launched the third option with the goal of offering concrete alternatives to those vulnerable to ISIS recruitment. ATP unites with moderate leaders of the Islamic faith to pursue this goal. Recognizing Victor as a man of the book, a key leader of the Sunni Endowment is now working with ATP to craft a common narrative designed to prevent men of military age from being assimilated into ISIS.

Mr. Speaker, the prophet Isaiah said: The wolf also shall lie down with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

Victor Marx and All Things Possible Ministries have brought this powerful ministry to life in a very touching way. It should encourage all of us to relentlessly pursue that day when the light of hope will fall across all of the lonely faces of God’s children all over this world and to that time when future generations, of those whom Jesus called the least of these our brothers and sisters, will be able to walk in the sunlight of liberty for as long as mankind inherits the Earth.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Victor Marx and All Things Possible, and I thank them for trying to make a better world.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

DISMANTLING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 30 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this has been a fascinating 2 weeks here on Capitol Hill. We have had, last week, all night sessions in our Ways and Means Committee and on the Energy and Commerce Committee dealing with the Republican plan to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. At times, Mr. Speaker, it is really hard to process all of the claims and counterclaims that are going on. I feel occasionally like I am in an alternative universe, and it is not just because we were up until 4:30 in the morning debating this.

People have lost track of how we got to this point—what was happening earlier, what has been the benefit and accomplishment of the Affordable Care Act, and what is going to happen moving forward were we to adopt a really disastrous proposal advanced by my Republican friends.

Twenty-five years ago, I was in a different role as Portland’s commissioner of public works. And one of the elements in my portfolio for several years was to deal with personnel and benefits and health care. I am fully aware of trying to deal with our 6,000 employees to provide them with affordable health care that the city, as the employer, could afford, and that wasn’t too burdensome on our employees. We were caught in a situation with rapidly escalating costs, inflation for medical care twice the rate of the ordinary inflation; we were having problems with employers maintaining coverage in an affordable fashion; and the individual market was, frankly, very chaotic and troublesome.

I have with me here a report from the Kaiser Family Foundation from March of 2009. They talked about these challenges—how the United States healthcare spending had risen from 1970 from 7.2 percent of the gross domestic product to where they projected that it was going to cost us by 2018, next year.